

VIEWS BY THE ECHO PRESS

THUMBS UP/ THUMBS DOWN



Contributed photo

Team Riese bags, which are put together by Riese Kløver of Alexandria, contain such items as aromatherapy roller balls, natural skin care, travel size products, hand-held games and putty, fun socks, gift cards, chapsticks, journals, pens and more.

Team Riese helps teens with heart problems

Thumbs Up: Riese Kløver of Alexandria, who organized the “Team Riese Project” this past holiday season, is making a difference in hospitals across the state. She led the effort to provide care item bags for teens recovering from heart surgery. The bags contain aromatherapy roller balls, natural skin care, travel size products, hand-held games and putty, fun socks, gift cards, chapsticks, journals, pens, inspirational jewelry, hair ties and more. The Echo Press featured her in the Dec. 3 Life section, “Putting her heart into it.” This week, the newspaper received a letter from Kløver, who attends St. Catherine’s University, thanking all those who donated to the “Team Riese Project” this past holiday season. “More than 40 bags were distributed to hospitalized cardiac teenagers at Children’s Minneapolis, Children’s St. Paul, and Mayo in Rochester,” Riese said. “These bags were much appreciated and brought some fun and excitement to these seriously ill kids. Again, thanks for your generosity and gifts to Team Riese!”

Those who give blood

Thumbs Up: All those who give blood deserve everyone’s heart-felt appreciation. Especially now. The American Red Cross said it’s facing a national blood crisis – its worst blood shortage in more than a decade. Dangerously low blood supply levels are posing a concerning risk to patient care and forcing doctors to make difficult decisions about who receives blood transfusions and who will need to wait until more products become available. The Red Cross points out that blood donations are critically needed to help prevent further delays in vital medical treatments. Donors of all blood types are urged to make an appointment now to give in the weeks ahead. In recent weeks, the Red Cross had less than a one-day supply of critical blood types and has had to limit blood product distributions to hospitals. At times, as much as one-quarter of hospital blood needs are not being met. Red Cross leaders say the organization continues to confront relentless challenges due to COVID-19, including about a 10% overall decline in the number of people donating blood as well as ongoing blood drive cancellations and staffing

limitations. Additionally, the pandemic has contributed to a 62% drop in blood drives at schools and colleges. Make an appointment to give blood as soon as possible by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting RedCrossBlood.org or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

Jaywalkers in black clothes

Thumbs Down: When it gets dark outside and you’re wearing black clothing from head to toe while walking along a busy road, you are putting yourself in grave danger. Yet it happens all too often. Just this past Monday night, a resident was driving along County Road 22 when out of the blackness ahead, he saw, at the last second, a person in dark clothing trying to cross the road right in front of him. Fortunately, he was able to avoid hitting the jaywalker. Please, pedestrians, use some common sense. Wear bright, easy-to-spot clothing or reflective gear so that drivers can see you coming from a long ways away. And don’t jaywalk.

Fighting poverty with shoes

Thumbs Up: The Alexandria Evening Lions recently participated in the Lions District 5M4 “Soles 4 Souls” program, collecting shoes that are distributed throughout the world to fight poverty. This year, 4,125 pairs of shoes and boots were tied and banded, 15 pairs per bag, sent to Sauk Centre Lions and Leo club, then shipped to a sorting facility. “Alexandria Area High School Key Club, Alexandria Senior Center, KXRA Radio Station, Someplace Safe, Endless Treasures, St. Mary’s School and various retailers helped with our collections,” noted Lions members Patti Dahlheimer, Tudor Ledum and Kim Fagen.

Neglecting pets in the cold

Thumbs Down: When the weather turns bitterly cold, some people think their dog or cat can be left outside for long periods of time because of their fur. But that could be a mistake. Reports of pets being neglected in the winter come across the law enforcement scanner too often. Dogs should not be left outside unattended in below-freezing temperatures and in higher temperatures than that for smaller, elderly pets or those with certain medical conditions, according to Dr. Kristi Flynn, an assistant professor and veterinarian in the University of Minnesota’s College of Veterinary Medicine. Flynn was featured in the “Talking... with U of M” newsletter. She noted that dogs and cats, like people, can experience frostbite, hypothermia and even death with exposure to the cold. She said that owners should seek veterinary care for their pets if they notice signs, such as red, painful paws or ear tips, or even lethargy, similar to a person experiencing hypothermia.

If you have a suggestion for a Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down, email it to aedenloff@echopress.com or mail it to Echo Press, P.O. Box 549, Alexandria, MN 56308.

LETTER

Speeding and safety on Alexandria’s Broadway

To the editor:

Agree or disagree: The speed limit on downtown Alexandria (Broadway) should be enforced to 20 mph. Have you tried to parallel park? Maybe knock out your front-left headlight or lose

your door when trying to get out of your car? Or if you’re lucky to get out of your car and a truck comes by at 40 mph and takes the cane out from under you? These are actual things that have happened.

Ron Stoen
Lowry, MN

A sugary bridge too far

I should begin this column by saying I like to eat things that are bad for me.

I love salt. I love sugar. I love butter. I love candy.

If there were a way to combine them all in a blender and come out with an actual food product I would probably love that, too.

That being said, there are

limits.

I was suspicious the first time I heard about Mrs. Butterworth’s Fruity Pebbles Flavored Syrup. Fruity Pebbles are good, pancakes are good, so what’s the problem?

The sugar content is high, but no higher than most regular maple syrups. For one two-tablespoon serving, there is 22 grams total sugars, making 44% of the day’s total sugar intake.

This is exactly the same as Mrs. Butterworth’s Original Syrup, as is the calorie content, 110 calories per two tablespoons.

There are plenty of maple syrups out there with higher sugar and calorie contents, so this isn’t quite as unusual as you might suspect.

Anyhow, despite my misgivings, I was intrigued enough by the concept of Mrs. Butterworth’s Fruity Pebbles Flavored Syrup to buy a bottle and try it out.

I did not, however, buy its companion product, Mrs. Butterworth’s EPIC Fruity Pebbles Pancake Kit. This includes not only pancake mix and cereal,



Travis Gulbrandson / Alexandria Echo Press
Exhibit A: Mrs. Butterworth’s Fruity Pebbles Flavored Syrup.

but a package of frosting to put on your pancakes along with the syrup (or not).

Surprisingly, although one serving — one pancake, basically — contains 200 calories, its sugar content is lower than the syrup, at 17 grams total sugars, or 32% of your daily intake.

As I didn’t want to find out what hypoglycemia feels like, I just bought the syrup.

Now, having bought the syrup, and having eaten the syrup with some pancakes, I can tell you how I feel about it.

It is terrible.

It does taste like Fruity Pebbles, and yet somehow, it is terrible.

From the first bite, I knew it was a bad idea.

It was so sweet that I flinched. My stomach began to gurgle and I knew I would have to take it slowly. Twenty minutes later, I was done,

having eaten only two small pancakes with a small amount of syrup, and feeling like my teeth had grown sweaters and that I needed to go into hibernation.

I can tell you with some certainty that if I were 5 years old, I probably would have loved the stuff, would have wanted to forgo the pancakes altogether and drink it straight from a glass, like orange juice.

Now, being almost 40, I can see Mrs. Butterworth’s Fruity Pebbles Flavored Syrup for what it truly is: Diabetes in a bottle.

I don’t have a problem with high-calorie, high-sodium, high-carb foods. Quite the opposite. I love them. But somehow, this product seems to have crossed a line.

Is it because the syrup, unlike say, bacon, is marketed specifically to children? Is it because it has absolutely no redeemable nutritional value? Is it because it’s the food equivalent of trash TV?

I don’t know. Truthfully, I don’t really care about any of those things.

Perhaps the problem lies in the way eating the syrup made me feel: Old. Too old for that kind of thing. I didn’t like that.

I guess if I’m trying to say anything, it would be, don’t avoid Mrs. Butterworth’s Fruity Pebbles Flavored Syrup because it’s bad for you. Avoid it because it’s just bad.

I’m sorry, 5-year-old me. Very sorry.

“It’s Our Turn” is a weekly column that rotates among members of the Echo Press editorial staff.

Email reporter Travis Gulbrandson at tgulbrandson@echopress.com

LETTERS

Disruption at school board meeting was embarrassing to witness

To the editor:

We have attended several District 206 School Board meetings since prior to the special election held last November and been shocked and dismayed at the behavior of many in the audiences.

The board has generously allowed time at the beginning of each meeting for the public to address them with any concerns they may have. It was made clear that each speaker would be limited to three minutes to allow many people to contribute. The rule was rudely ignored even when reminded and admonished by the chair that the time had expired.

Many in the audience showed their support both with applause and audible comments when they agreed with a speaker’s viewpoint. At the Dec. 20 meeting, a large percentage of the audience was there to support a newly elected board member at her first meeting. A woman who spoke about issues the group disagreed with was continually and loudly interrupted with shouts from audience members. Where are the adults here who can listen respectfully to others even when they may disagree?

People need to understand that a board meeting is not a public meeting in which they are allowed to participate. Meetings are open to the public, yes, but those in attendance must remember that they are there to observe and listen, not to participate. It was embarrassing to witness the behavior by many of those present at the December meeting. We felt especially bad for the high school Robotics Team students who were there to speak to the board about their activities and accomplishments and were forced to sit through the inappropriate and out-of-control display of disruption and disrespect. The board members, Ms. Gibson and the high school group are all owed an apology.

Kathleen and Bruce Pohlig
Alexandria, MN

Thoughts about abortion, what to do, how to help

To the editor:

I’m sure I’m probably going to get hate mail, or angry responses to what I’m about to say about abortion.

First, of all, I don’t believe that it should

be used as a form of birth control, OK? Secondly, a woman cannot impregnate herself! It’s a two-way street. Thirdly, I’m NOT a feminazi. But it’s a proven fact that a large percentage of men take off; when they find out their girlfriend is pregnant or find a way to get out of child support. Leaving the woman and unborn or born, fend for themselves. Fourthly, there are also people who blow up clinics which can kill or maim those that are inside. Isn’t that murder as well? And if you’re so against it, why don’t you take care of all the unwanted – those born addicted to drugs, alcohol, etc.?

Put your money where your mouth is. Help financially or by adopting these poor unfortunate infants and children who get put in orphanages, foster homes or left to die in a garbage can or dumpster. What about them? How would you feel if your young daughter got pregnant from rape, or promised the lie that if they do get pregnant, they (males) will marry and take care of them? I’ve heard that falsehood many times in my life and so have other females I’ve known as well.

Don’t get me wrong there are many men who do take responsibility for their actions. But still, they tend to be the minority, which is very unfortunate for everyone. Look at the proven statistics, that women and children are the poorest people on this earth. So, those who are against this procedure should think about the facts, before protesting, anger and un-Christian actions. That’s all I’m asking for anyone who is anti-abortion. Think: How would it feel if it were you?

Erin M. Weatherwax
Alexandria, MN

Nursing faculty at Alexandria College deserves recognition

To the editor:

Concerning the column published Dec. 29 written by Michael Seymour, president of the Alexandria Technical and Community College: Mr. Seymour failed to acknowledge the people that made it possible for the students to graduate – the nursing faculty. His faculty deserves recognition for the countless hours spent retrofitting lesson plans, labs and clinicals to fit the safety and needs of the students.

Deb Carlson
Alexandria, MN